

# PRESCHOOL NUTRITION NEWS

A newsletter for preschool parents and teachers

## Have a Picky Eater?

It is common for young children to go through phases of picky eating. They may eat only a certain type of food or refuse foods based on a certain color or texture. They may also play at the table and may not want to eat. Sometimes it can be worrisome that picky eaters are not getting enough nutrition. However, as long as children are growing healthy, they are most likely eating enough. A child's doctor can evaluate growth if there are concerns.



## Coping with Picky Eating

Picky eating is temporary. If you don't make it a big deal, it will usually end before school age. Try the following tips to help you deal with picky eating behavior in a positive way. Check the ones that work for you and your child.

- Let children be “produce pickers.” Let them pick out fruits and veggies at the store.
- Have children help prepare meals. Children learn about food and get excited about tasting food when they help make meals. Let them add ingredients, scrub veggies, or help stir food.
- Offer choices. Rather than ask, “Do you want broccoli for dinner?” ask “Which would you like for dinner, broccoli or cauliflower?”
- Enjoy each other while eating family meals together. Talk about what family members did during the day, what made them laugh, or what they did for fun. Turn off the TV and keep phones away from the table to focus on family time.
- Offer the same foods for the whole family. Serve the same meal to adults and kids. Let them see you enjoy a variety of healthy foods. Talk about the colors, shapes, and textures on the plate.

# Trying New Foods

Children may not want to try new foods. It is normal for children to reject foods they have never tried before. Here are some tips to get your child to try new foods:

- Start with small portions. Let children try small portions of new foods that you enjoy. Give them a small taste at first and be patient with them. When they develop a taste for more types of foods, it's easier to plan family meals.
- Offer one new food at a time. Serve something that you know your child likes along with the new food. Offering more new foods all at once could be too much for your child.
- Be a good role model. Try new foods yourself. Describe their taste, texture, and smell to your child. They learn from watching you. Eat fruits and vegetables and your child will too.
- Offer new foods first. Your child is most hungry at the start of a meal.
- Let children learn by serving themselves. Teach them to take small amounts at first. Tell children that they can get more food if they are still hungry.
- Offer new foods many times. Sometimes, new foods take time. Children don't always take to new foods right away. It may take up to a dozen tries for a child to accept a new food.



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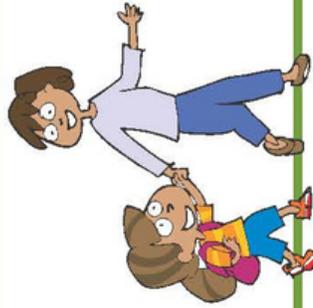
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# Phrases that **HELP** and **HINDER**



As the caregiver, you play the biggest role in your child's eating behavior. What you say has an impact on developing healthy eating habits. Negative phrases can easily be changed into positive, helpful ones!

## Phrases that **HINDER**

### INSTEAD OF ...

*Eat that for me.*

*If you do not eat one more bite, I will be mad.*

Phrases like these teach your child to eat for your approval and love. This can lead your child to have unhealthy behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs about food and about themselves.

### INSTEAD OF ...

*You're such a big girl, you finished all your peas.*

*Jenny, look at your sister. She ate all of her bananas.*

*You have to take one more bite before you leave the table.*

Phrases like these teach your child to ignore fullness. It is better for kids to stop eating when full or satisfied than when all of the food has been eaten.

### INSTEAD OF ...

*See, that didn't taste so bad, did it?*

This implies to your child that he or she was wrong to refuse the food. This can lead to unhealthy attitudes about food or self.

### INSTEAD OF ...

*No dessert until you eat your vegetables.*

*Stop crying and I will give you a cookie.*

Offering some foods, like dessert, in reward for finishing others, like vegetables, makes some foods seem better than others. Getting a food treat when upset teaches your child to eat to feel better. This can lead to overeating.

## Phrases that **HELP**

### TRY ...

*This is kiwi fruit, it's sweet like a strawberry.*

*These radishes are very crunchy!*

Phrases like these help to point out the sensory qualities of food. They encourage your child to try new foods.

### TRY ...

*Is your stomach telling you that you're full?*

*Is your stomach still making its hungry growling noise?*

*Has your tummy had enough?*

Phrases like these help your child to recognize when he or she is full. This can prevent overeating.



### TRY ...

*Do you like that?*

*Which one is your favorite?*

*Everybody likes different foods, don't they?*

Phrases like these make your child feel like he or she is making the choices. It also shifts the focus toward the taste of food rather than who was right.

### TRY ...

*We can try these vegetables again another time. Next time would you like to try them raw instead of cooked?*

*I am sorry you are sad. Come here and let me give you a big hug.*

Reward your child with attention and kind words. Comfort him or her with hugs and talks. Show love by spending time and having fun together.